



Community voices: The value of service-learning

Eric Hartman, Visiting Assistant Professor of Global Studies, Providence College
[emhartman@gmail.com]

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Summary

Service-learning scholars have called for improved research on community outcomes. Arguably, the first wave of that research focused on whether engagement was democratic or reciprocal. Other debates have investigated the extent to which partnerships must be “transformational” rather than “transactional.” This paper offers a community articulation of service-learning’s value based on data from a dozen partnerships working with hundreds of students at several universities.

The paper’s first data set is derived from an AmeriCorps partnership involving 35 institutions, 244 education awards, and more than 100 community partnerships. The second data set was obtained from a

major Research 1 university initiative to require a first year civic engagement seminar among students in several colleges (representing more than 1,000 total students). In each case, the author is leading an initiative to evaluate several of the respective program's outcomes, including community outcomes.

Employing an in vivo approach to grounded theory development (Creswell, 2006), the author will articulate community organizations' expression of the value of service-learning, including their concerns, challenges, and suggestions for best practice. In addition to employing Creswell's best practices for qualitative research, the author will also employ a flexible, iterative approach to keep an eye open for quantitative data that may emerge through in-depth community interviews. Specifically drawing on insights from community-based participatory research (Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, 2011) and participatory action research (Kiely & Hartman, 2010; Wheatley & Hartman, 2012), the author uses mixed-methods cases that support the overarching expression developed through the grounded theory articulation from numerous organizational interviews.

The resulting paper addresses the transformational-transactional conversation, specifically in terms dictated by the value that community organization members suggest during the interviews. This paper will fill a gap in the literature by adding the insights of numerous community organizations collectively and building on the keen articulations of community concerns that do already exist in small doses in the literature (Stoecker, 1991).

References

There were no references provided with this proposal.